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School Reform News

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Still No Choice for Poor and Minority Students

Failing public schools refuse to let parents move their children

BY ROBERT HOLLAND

Millions of children were left behind as the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reform began to take effect this fall. The law is supposed to ensure that parents can find improved opportunities for children trapped in chronically failing schools subsidized by the Title I program.

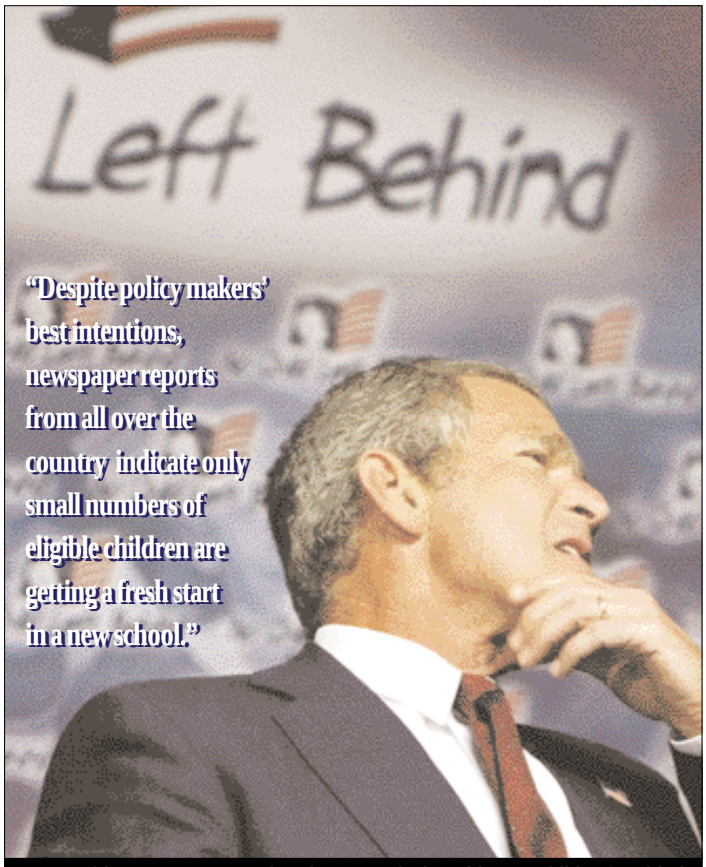
After a school has failed for two straight years to meet its state's academic standards, local districts are supposed to offer families the choice of a better-performing public school within the home district, plus free transportation. President George W. Bush wanted that choice to extend to private schools or public schools in adjoining districts, but congressional leaders adamantly opposed the use of vouchers.

If they fail for a third year, schools are supposed to allow parents to use up to $1,000 of their Title I subsidy to purchase supplemental educational services, such as private tutors or after-school programs. (See related story, "Already Booming, Tutoring Receives Large NCLB Boost," page 16).

NCLB negotiators decided the accountability provisions should apply immediately, so no child would have to wait years before finding relief.

Despite policymakers' best intentions, however,

NCLB continued on page 8


Left Behind
"Despite policy makers' best intentions, newspaper reports from all over the country indicate only small numbers of eligible children are getting a fresh start in a new school."

U.S. President George W. Bush waits to speak about his "No Child Left Behind" educational programs at the Parkview Arts and Sciences Magnet School in Little Rock, Arkansas August 29, 2002. *photo/Reuters/Win McNamee*

NEA September 11 Web Site Draws Criticism

Urges discussion of intolerance by Americans

BY KRISTA KAFER

An essay recommending parents and educators not "suggest any group is responsible" for last year's terrorist attack on the World Trade Center brought the National Education Association's new Web site, "Remember September 11th," under heavy criticism from the media, policy analysts, and even rival union the American Federation of Teachers.

The Web site, funded in part by a grant from Johnson & Johnson, provides lesson plans and resources for teachers and parents "to help young people learn from the September 11 tragedy."

The main source of the criticism is an essay posted under "Tips for Parents and Schools Regarding the Anniversary of 9/11." Although several lesson plans focus on intolerance and discrimination, critics perceive this one as going too far.

"We just don't think it is the best way to help teachers figure out instruction on 9-11," commented AFT spokeswoman Janet Bass.

In addition to its recommendation that teachers not suggest any group is respon-

NEA continued on page 6

Declining Literacy a Threat to Newspapers

Readership among young adults plummets

BY ROBERT HOLLAND

U.S. newspapers have a life-or-death interest in schoolchildren being taught how to read and becoming motivated to read regularly.

The trends are not encouraging—for literacy *or* for newspapers. National Assessment of Educational Progress reading scores for fourth-graders have not budged off dreadful over the past decade. Poor and minority children have fallen even further behind, despite a federal expenditure of $125 billion over 25 years that was supposed to narrow the gap.

Perhaps even more chilling was an analysis done by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Among 18 industrialized nations, OECD found, the United States ranked dead last in the literacy of 16- to 25-year-old high school graduates who did not go on to further study. Six in 10 of the high school graduates read below a level considered minimally necessary to cope with "the complex demands of modern life."

It hasn't always been that way. An OECD analyst noted that 30 years ago, the United States was the "undisputed leader" in educating its people. Now, it's the literacy laggard among developed nations.

Recent data on newspaper readership add further cause for concern.

Dead in Two Decades?

Writing for TechCentral Station, an online forum on technology and markets, economist Arnold

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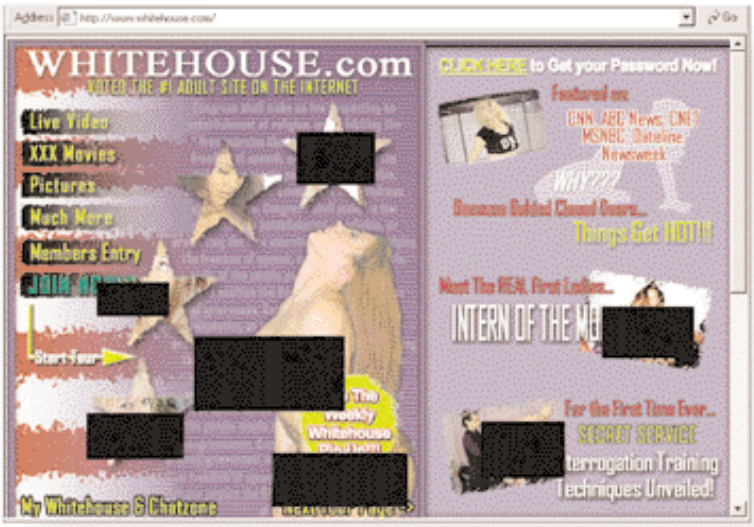

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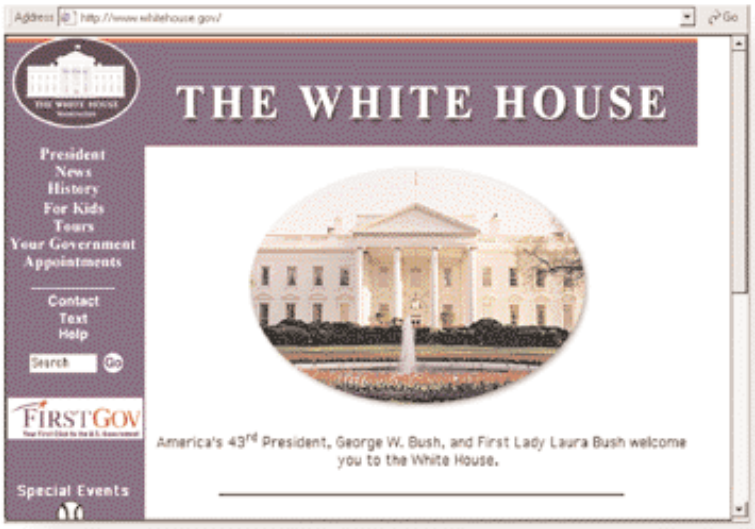

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Mr. Micah Porter, of D' Evelyn Junior/Senior High School in Denver, Colorado, is hereby named the recipient of the 2002 Henry Salvatori Prize for "Excellence in Teaching."

The *Hillsdale Academy Reference Guide* is an invaluable resource for teachers, administrators and parents who seek to educate their children in a well-balanced core of essential subjects. Based on the daily operation of Hillsdale Academy, the K-12 model school of Hillsdale College, the *Guide* contains information on curricula, supplementary reading, school culture, and parent and faculty handbooks. It is already in use at over 400 schools in all 50 states nationwide, as well as by countless home-schooling parents.

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School Reform News
EDITORIAL OFFICES

The Heartland Institute
19 South LaSalle, Suite 903
Chicago, Illinois 60603
312/377-4000 voice • 312/377-5000 fax
e-mail think@heartland.org

School Reform News is available on the Internet. Point your web browser to http://www.heartland.org.

PRESIDENT
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PUBLISHER
Nikki Saret

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Diane Carol Bast

MANAGING EDITOR
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COMMENTARY

Hold Schools Accountable for Cost of Finished Graduate

BY HERBERT J. WALBERG

U.S. taxpayers paid on average $108,730 to produce each 1998 high school graduate. But among the country's 50 largest districts, Cleveland's graduates cost almost $300,000, whereas Utah's similar-sized Jordan School District produced graduates for one-fifth of Cleveland's cost.

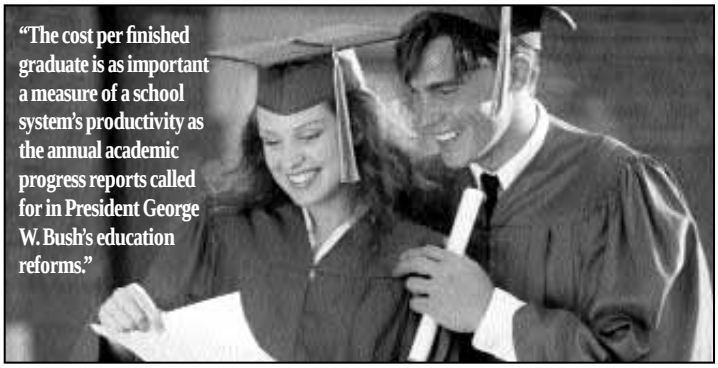
The cost per finished graduate is as important a measure of a school system's productivity as the annual academic progress reports called for in President George W. Bush's education reforms.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the annual per-pupil cost of K-12 public education was $6,189 for the 1997-98 school year, with state-level expenditures ranging from a low of $3,969 in Utah to a high of $9,643 in New Jersey. Because the purpose of these expenditures is to produce a high school graduate over a 13-year period, one measure of the cost of a K-12 education is $6,189 multiplied by 13, or $80,460 per pupil.

But Jay P. Greene of the Manhattan Institute recently calculated that only 74 percent of the class of 1998 actually graduated, ranging from a low of 59 percent in Tennessee to a high of 93 percent in Iowa. Graduation rates in the nation's 50 largest districts ranged from 28 percent in Cleveland to 87 percent in Fairfax County, Virginia.

Because the expenditure of $80,460 per pupil produced graduates only 74 percent of the time, the cost per finished U.S. high school graduate is $80,460 divided by 74 percent, or $108,730. Using this calculation provides a cost index to how productively each school, district, or state is using tax dollars.

This index varies significantly across jurisdictions. For example, it costs more to produce a high school graduate in the District of Columbia ($181,851) than in any of the 50 states. The three states with the highest costs per graduate are New Jersey ($156,701), New York ($155,507), and Alaska ($153,599). The three states with the lowest cost per graduate are Utah ($67,003), North Dakota ($75,542), and South Dakota ($77,818). The Dakotas are also efficient in another way: Their students typically score in the highest range on national examinations.



"The cost per finished graduate is as important a measure of a school system's productivity as the annual academic progress reports called for in President George W. Bush's education reforms."

Of the 50 largest school districts, Utah's Jordan School District produces each finished graduate for only $59,199, just over half the U.S. average. Cleveland has the highest cost per finished graduate in the country ($297,282), almost three times the U.S. average. Joining Cleveland are Milwaukee, Wisconsin ($243,886), and Columbus, Ohio ($197,080).

In these least efficient cities, lawmakers have recently tried vouchers (or scholarships) with which students are able to attend private schools. Studies by Caroline M. Hoxby and Paul E. Peterson, both of Harvard University and the Hoover Institution, show the benefits: lower costs, greater parental satisfaction, and increased achievement not only of scholarship students but of students who remain in public schools.

"Overall, an evaluation of Milwaukee suggests that public schools have a strong, positive productivity response to competition from vouchers," says Hoxby. "The schools that faced the most potential competition from vouchers had the best productivity response."

If we want more, better-educated high school graduates and more value for tax dollars, the solution is obvious: Unleash competition.

Herbert J. Walberg is chairman of the board of directors of The Heartland Institute. He is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and member of its Koret Task Force on K-12 Education. This material was first published as a Hoover Institute Weekly Essay *on June 10, 2002 and copyright of the Trustees of Leland Stanford*

Paige Backs Parental Choice at Meeting of State Legislators

BY JOSEPH BAST

On August 8, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige addressed a large and supportive audience of state elected officials at the American Legislative Exchange Council's 29th Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida. Nearly 1,000 elected state officials and business representatives gave the secretary standing ovations before and after his talk, interrupting him frequently with applause.

Paige used the occasion to confirm the Bush administration's commitment to using parental choice to improve the education of every child, "regardless of their zip code—every child in America." He repeated the administration's theme, "no child should be left behind."

To parents who think public schools are doing good enough, he said: "We have some good schools, but they exist as islands of excellence in a sea of not-so-excellence." And he gently chided those who oppose the administration's accountability and parental choice initiatives, saying "just spending money won't make these problems go away."

Paige said there were five "pillars of success" for school reform: high academic standards, accountability for results, local control and flexibility, parental choice, and teaching methods that work. During a brief discussion of parental choice, he endorsed vouchers and tax credits.

"Our defense relies not only on the strength of arms, but the strength of our values," he said at the conclusion of his talk. Because of the War on Terrorism, he said, high-quality schools are more important than ever. He pledged the Bush administration's continued devotion to the cause of reform.

Joseph Bast is president of The Heartland Institute, publisher of School Reform News.

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Ballot Initiatives Used to Reform Bilingual Education

Massachusetts and Colorado voters will decide in November

BY DON SOIFER

Theodore Roosevelt, the country's 26th President, was a firm believer in the ballot initiative as an instrument "not to destroy representative government, but to correct it whenever it becomes misrepresentative."

A century later, many school reformers have come to view the initiative as a powerful tool to bring about much-needed change, especially where other paths to change remain obstructed by legislative gridlock. Bilingual education reform offers a case in point.

In 1998, California voters began what since has become a national movement by approving Proposition 227, effectively ending bilingual education programs and replacing them with structured English immersion. The measure passed by a 2-1 margin, despite the opposition of nearly every major elected official in the state—with the noteworthy exception of Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan. Since then, California English learners have shown dramatic gains in reading, math, and English language skills.

Spurred by these positive results, bilingual education reform has spread rapidly throughout the United States. Arizona voters followed with a proposition of their own, which passed by a similarly wide margin in 2000. Last year's federal No Child Left Behind Act made unprecedented changes focused on improving English fluency, including replacing the entire funding process for bilingual education programs.

This November, voters in Massachusetts and Colorado will consider ballot initiatives based on the California and Arizona laws.

Massachusetts Question 2

The Massachusetts campaign—English for the Children of Massachusetts—is cochaired by three members of the Governor's Massachusetts Bilingual Education Advisory Council: Chelsea High School Principal Lincoln Tamayo; Dr. Rosalie Porter, former director of bilingual education programs in Newton and a prominent advocate of English immersion; and Boston University Professor Christine Rossell.

Even before Question 2 qualified for the ballot, it had triggered strong reactions by opponents urging a "no" vote and by lawmakers seeking to reverse its momentum. In August, Acting Governor Jane Swift signed into law a series of reforms that included a three-year limit on the time students can remain in bilingual programs, a requirement that English learners be taught to the same curriculum and standards as English-speaking children, and better accountability for progress toward English fluency.

Supporters of Question 2 have called the changes inadequate. Cochair Porter declared, "this last-minute desperation move to stop our campaign will fool no one."

Massachusetts has a growing population of more than 45,000 students in "transitional bilingual education." Its 31-year-old bilingual law is the nation's oldest. But bilingual students have consistently trailed their peers in mainstream English-speaking classrooms on standardized tests, often at an alarming rate.

For example, one study discovered students in a Springfield bilingual program scored lower on average on the English-reading post-test than they did on the pre-test a year earlier in two of the program's three schools. In another study, reading scores of native English speakers participating alongside English learners in a "two-way bilingual inclusionary program" declined in all four of the program's schools.

Colorado Amendment 31

In Colorado, a ballot initiative that would amend the state constitution to eliminate bilingual education in favor of English immersion will appear on the November ballot as Amendment 31. The amendment is sponsored by English for the Children of Colorado, chaired by former Denver School Board member Rita Montero.

Colorado elementary school students in bilingual education performed substantially and uniformly worse than their peers in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes on the latest Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) reading and writing test scores released in August. ESL classes are taught mostly in English and have as their primary focus to teach children English. The disparities were greatest among children in grades 3 and 4, the youngest grade levels assessed.

Opponents Gearing Up

California software entrepreneur Ron Unz, the reform pioneer who authored the California law and led winning campaigns there and in Arizona, has worked closely with state leaders in Massachusetts and Colorado.

Campaigns opposing these reforms are now underway in both states, with activities ranging from rallies and Web sites to legal challenges, which have yet to bear fruit.

"It seems they're doing everything they can to avoid the issue of whether or not bilingual education works," Unz observed.

Don Soifer is executive vice president of the Lexington Institute. His email address is soifer@lexingtoninstitute.org.

Correction: In "Blaine Amendment Falls in Washington," in the September 2002 issue of *School Reform News*, we incorrectly reported the time period during which states entered the Union with Blaine amendments in their constitutions. The correct timeframe is from 1848 to 1899. *School Reform News* regrets the error.

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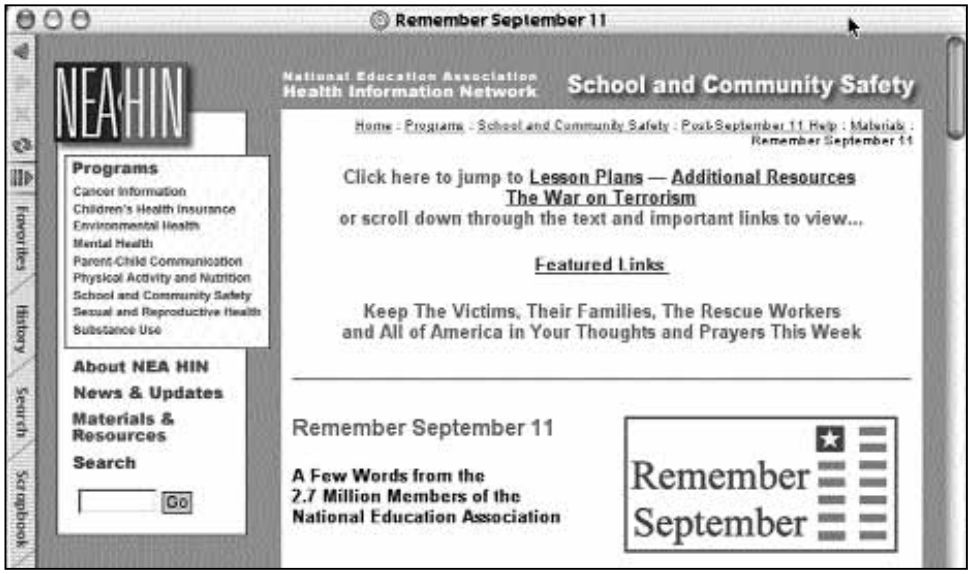
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WWW The National Education Association Web site, "Remember September 11th," is at **http://neahin.org/programs/schoolsafety/september11/materials/lessonhome.htm**.

Brian Lippincott's essay for the National Association of School Psychologists, "A National Tragedy: Promoting Tolerance and Peace in Children: Tips for Parents and Schools," is at **www.nasponline.org/NEAT/tolerance.html**.

The lesson plan for 9/11 from the Bill of Rights Institute is at **www.billofrightsinstitute.org/pdf/911complete.pdf**.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation resource, "September 11: What Our Children Need to Know," is at **www.edexcellence.net/Sept11/September11.pdf**.

NEA continued from page 1

sible for the attack, the essay urges discussion of "historical instances of American intolerance," of which the internment of "Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor and the backlash against Arab Americans during the Gulf War are obvious examples."

The essay includes many other suggestions. It tells parents and teachers to "Emphasize positive, familiar images of diverse ethnic groups" and "Read books with your children that address prejudice, tolerance, and hate." There is no mention, however, of prejudice and intolerance against Americans or how such hatred culminated in the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

Reacting to the criticism, the NEA issued a press release on August 27, stating, "The site has been subjected to some criticism by those who have taken the material out of context. Using this national tragedy to attempt to score political points is a new low, and we urge visitors to make their own assessments of its value. We are confident that most will find the site quite useful in helping our young people cope with the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks."

Jerald Newberry, director of the group that produced the site—the NEA's Health Information Network—went further and claimed bigotry was behind the criticism of the tolerance lessons.

"If you boil down the concerns of the opposition, what I would call the far right, ultimately what it boils down to is: 'I am not comfortable with my child being in school with someone who's different. I want to keep my child surrounded by people who are identical to me. The world is getting too diverse, and I'm scared,'" Newberry told *New York Times* journalist Kate Zernike.

Despite the controversy, the union has kept the "Tips for Parents and Schools Regarding the Anniversary of 9/11" essay posted, under the rationale it is just one of many diverse viewpoints available on the site.

Initially posted as written by Brian Lippincott of John F. Kennedy University's Graduate School of Professional Psychology, the essay was later reposted as part of an essay by the National Association of School Psychologists under the title "A National Tragedy: Promoting Tolerance and Peace in Children: Tips for Parents and Schools."

Other Criticism

Criticism of the Web site, however, is not confined to Lippincott's essay. Questions also have been raised about the academic value of many of the NEA's lesson plans.

Chester E. Finn Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, called the site a "mishmash of pop-psychotherapeutics, feel-goodism, relativism, and overblown multiculturalism, even more noteworthy for what's not there: history, civics, patriotism, etc."

While some of the lesson plans include the reading of historical documents, an analysis of media sources, an examination of world religions, and other academic activities, more of them focus on arts and crafts, music, and the sharing of feelings. Examples are numerous:

- A lesson plan for elementary school students includes the "sending of patriotically themed stuffed bears across the nation."
- Another plan for grades 3-12 describes how students can build a "moving memorial" by expressing themselves through physical movements that convey various emotions.
- The objective of a middle school lesson plan is "Diversity awareness and safe school initiatives through the construction of a commemorative quilt memorializing the events of September 11."
- In another lesson plan, students are given the "opportunity to discuss and have validated their feelings about the events of September 11 in a non-judgmental discussion circle" called the "circle of feelings."
- "Kindness Towers Here" gives students in all grades the opportunity to write and display stories in the shape of two towers on the wall or on a cardboard structure.

Lesson plan contributors include the American Red Cross, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Association of School Psychologists, and others. The site also contains resource links to major news sources, historical documents, and government public safety agencies. New lesson plans are added daily to the Web site. There is an on-line form for submitting new plans.

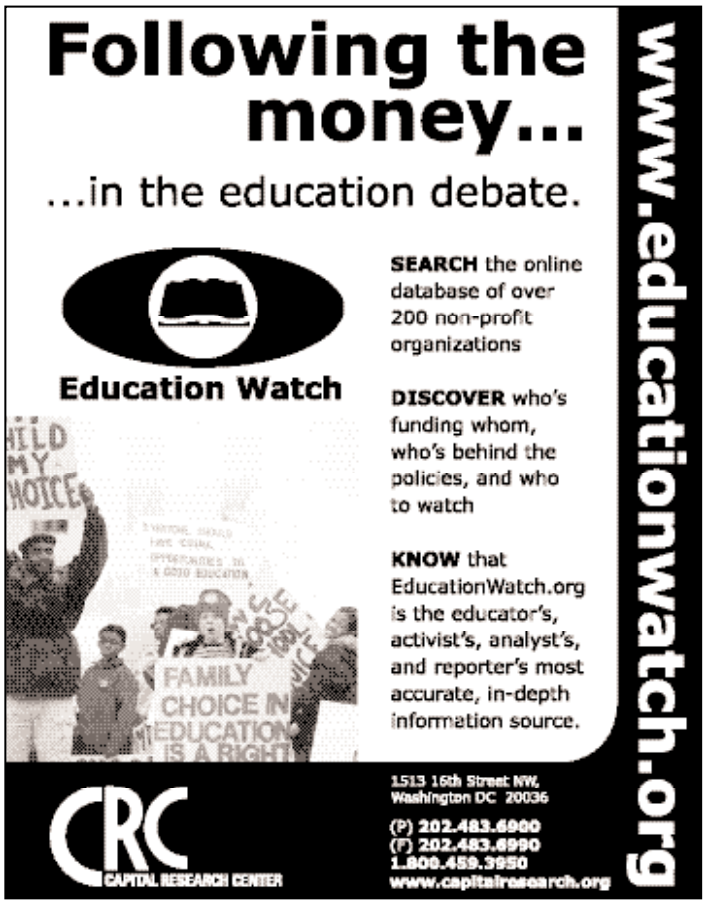
Other Sources

The NEA Web site was not the only source of materials for teachers and parents marking the anniversary of the terrorist attack.

The Bill of Rights Institute, an organization dedicated to improving civics education in schools, provided a 9/11 lesson plan. The Institute's plan focuses on the expression of civic values on 9/11 and throughout America's history.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation has made available a resource entitled "September 11: What Our Children Need to Know," which contains 23 short essays on what children should learn from 9/11. Written by eminent educators, historians, political scientists, and policy analysts, the essays focus on history, civics, valor, and terrorism.

Krista Kafer is senior policy analyst for education at The Heritage Foundation. Her email address is krista.kafer@heritage.org.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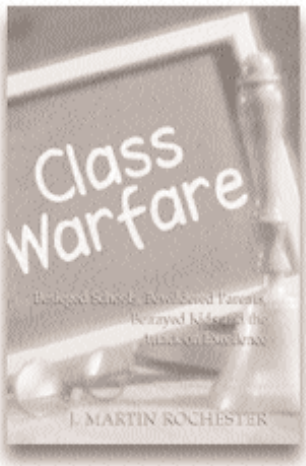
Sol Stern vividly describes how cash-starved Catholic schools in the South Bronx and other similar areas across the country are performing small educational miracles every day with children the public schools have given up on. Drawing on personal observation and intimate conversations with parents, students and educators in New York, Milwaukee, Cleveland and other cities gripped by a school crisis, Breaking Free is the first book to transform school choice from an abstract policy issue into a question of basic personal freedom.

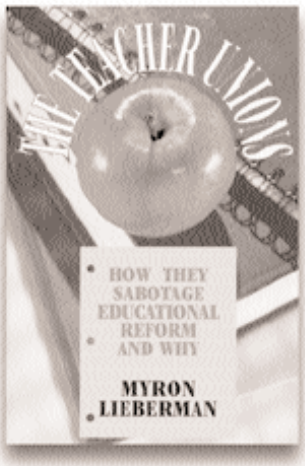


"This book shows us the intellectual absurdities, faddism and tedium that all too often characterize the contemporary classroom. Rochester is a sort of Everyparent — wanting the best for kids, understanding the problems teachers face, trying to help through personal involvement, but winding up deeply disillusioned."

—David Horowitz

ISBN: 1-893554-53-8
$26.95, 250 pages

Martin Rochester takes the reader on a field trip that begins with his own upper-middle-class suburban school district in St. Louis and then moves on to inner-city locales and some of the best private schools, showing along the way how "pack pedagogy" has steamrolled parental resistance in promoting disasters such as whole language reading, fuzzy math, multiple intelligences theory, and all the other fads found in today's schools.

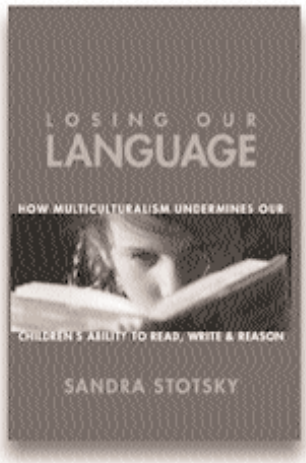


"The most comprehensive account yet of how the public schools are failing us and why…Brutally honest and politically incorrect. Everyone who cares about American education should read it."

—Washington Post Educational Review

ISBN: 1-893554-21-X
$16.95, 264 pages

A powerful exposé on how the NEA and AFT use their power to smother desperately needed educational innovations. Lieberman's provocative diagnosis of what ails American education is on the money. So is his prescription for change—that teachers would be better served by professional organizations that did not waste money on affluent bureaucrats; and parents and children would be better served by organizations that focused on education improvement, not social engineering.



"Reading Losing Our Language should send parents rushing to their school board with pointed questions."

—Wall Street Journal

ISBN: 1-893554-48-1
$16.95, 288 pages

Maverick Harvard educational researcher Sandra Stotsky shows how the incorporation of a multicultural agenda into basal readers, the primary tool for teaching reading in elementary school, has had a disastrous effect on students' reading and test scores. Instead of using classic stories like Arabian Nights and Robinson Crusoe, which enlarge imagination as well as vocabulary, these readers now give students politically and ethnically correct stories whose concepts are banal and whose language—including Swahili and other trendy dialects—is literally foreign.

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NCLB continued from page 1

newspaper reports from all over the country indicate only small numbers of eligible children are getting a fresh start in a new school. Reasons ranged from willful efforts of school officials to frustrate choice, to the lack of space in better public schools, to understandable confusion about parental rights or district responsibilities under the new federal law.

In Ohio—home of the Cleveland voucher program, upheld as constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in the June 27 *Zelman* decision—many parents had not been informed by their districts of their right to public school choice under NCLB.

"Even parents who are aware of the law have, in some cases, been thwarted in their efforts to take advantage of the transfer, leaving them baffled and angry," reported the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*.

Chicago's Three-Mile Limit

In Chicago, Mayor Richard M. Daley termed "ridiculous" the federal government's mandate that 125,000 children in 179 failing Chicago schools be offered transfers to other public schools. There just isn't room, Daley complained; besides, many of the recipient public schools also are "non-performing." Ultimately, the city offered just under 3,000 transfer slots spread across 90 schools, prohibiting transfers to schools more than three miles away from a failing school.

Fritz Steiger, president of Children First America, a corporate-led foundation that supports school choice, said Daley had recognized the problem with government schools but failed to "make the logical leap to the obvious solution." Catholic schools have been closing in the Chicago Archdiocese—14 in January 2002 alone. Vouchers could ensure students private as well as public school choice.

"How many of these schools would still be there to provide these students with an option for a quality education were there a voucher program in place in Chicago?" Steiger asked.

Delay in Vermont

In Vermont, the state took advantage of a loophole to delay offering choice at six public schools identified as needing improvement. Education Commissioner Ray McNulty said U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige agreed to let Vermont officials wait until mid-year for an analysis of 2001-02 test scores. That angered Libby Sternberg, executive director of Vermonters for Better Education.

"While several prominent champions of our public school system (and opponents of school choice) send or sent their own children to private schools, Vermont has slammed the door in the face of low-income parents who would merely have had the opportunity to choose another public school," Sternberg noted in a letter to McNulty. "This is shameful."

The numbers are small in Vermont, but huge in Los Angeles. There, almost 230,000 children qualify for publicly financed transfers, but fewer than 100 seats were available in better-performing schools.

Superintendent Roy Romer's comments to the *Los Angeles Times* echoed the argument of many public educators: "Just to move children from one building to another building does not guarantee that they are going to learn that much better. We can take the existing school and make it work."

A Choice—to Win the Lottery?

Baltimore school officials said they could accommodate transfers by only 194 of the 30,000 students eligible under NCLB. *Baltimore Sun* columnist Mike Bowler commented, "this isn't school choice any more than the Maryland Lottery gives players a choice of winnings."

A more genuine solution would use Title I money to transport children from Baltimore's 83 failing schools to better-performing ones in neighboring districts, he said. The NCLB urges districts to seek compacts with neighboring districts for inter-district exchanges of students, but it does not require such transfers.

Similarly, Cincinnati officials said they had space to accommodate transfers by only 198 of the 10,000 children eligible for relief under NCLB. District spokesman Janet Walsh told the *Cincinnati Enquirer* the district had made every effort to abide by the spirit and letter of the law.

"We have been encouraging choice in Cincinnati Public Schools for decades," she added. "A lot of parents have already exercised choice. The law does not ask them to leave."

Outside the big cities, issues sometimes come into a different focus. Philip Shortman, superintendent of the Hays-Lodgepole district in Montana, said he expects his elementary and middle schools to work their way off the failing list by next year. And he supports the new NCLB requirements.

"It's good," he told the *Billings Gazette*. "It's common sense. It's made school districts more accountable. It's about time. People have been too lax."

Different Standards

To be sure, some questions about the law's initial impact are legitimate.

Consider, for example, the U.S. Department of Education's enumeration state by state of the 8,600 Title I-aided schools deemed to have fallen short of state-defined "adequate yearly progress." The numbers differ wildly from one

NCLB continued on next page

U.S. Educators Ignoring the Lessons of History

The study of history is a powerful antidote to contemporary arrogance. It is humbling to discover how many of our glib assumptions, which seem to us novel and plausible, have been tested before, not once but many times and in innumerable guises; and discovered to be, at great human cost, wholly false.

PAUL JOHNSON

The above quotation is one of Thomas Sowell's favorites, and its point underlies a recent article on U.S. educational fads written by Sowell, the Rose and Milton Friedman Senior Fellow in Public Policy at the Hoover Institution.

Sowell points out that the U.S. educational establishment's advocacy of "discovery learning" and its objection to "teaching to the test" had their parallels in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and in China during the 1950s and 1960s, when these ideas were applied wholesale to the educational systems in the two countries.

However, the results of this change in teaching strategy were such that both countries quickly returned to the idea of "teaching to the test." By the late 1920s, "the bad educational consequences were turning the Soviet government leadership against these fads," notes Sowell. And a decade after examinations were abolished in China and social "relevance" was given more weight, the examinations were restored because "the quality of education has declined sharply," according to the country's Ministry of Education.

"[S]chools have not paid attention to educational standards and instead overemphasized practical work; students' knowledge of theory and basic skills in their area of specialization have been disregarded," complained Deng Xiaoping, decrying "the deterioration of academic standards."

Choice, Teacher Quality, and Curriculum

In a conversation with Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs Research Director Brandon Dutcher, Sowell recently provided the following public policy prescription to rescue children from public schools that are failing to equip large numbers of students with even fundamental reading skills:

"The most immediate thing that policy-makers can do to rescue many low-income and minority students, especially, is to give their parents a choice of schools—public and private—through vouchers.

"For the public schools in general, the most important thing is to break the stranglehold of the teachers' unions and the schools of education that have filtered out intelligent people who cannot stand the drivel they would have to go through to get a credential. Despite attempts to depict these credentials as evidence of being 'qualified' to teach, it is closer to being a certificate of being unqualified.

"There also needs to be an unequivocally clear policy that children are sent to school to acquire academic skills, not to be propagandized with PC, put through psychological experiments, or used as guinea pigs for educational or other fads. Teachers who refuse to teach in accordance with this policy should be fired."

"The most immediate thing that policy-makers can do to rescue many low-income and minority students, especially, is to give their parents a choice of schools—public and private—through vouchers."

THOMAS SOWELL

From "A Conversation with Thomas Sowell," *Perspective*, Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, July 2002. http://www.ocpathink.org/Pages/Perspective0702.htm

Additional information on publications by Thomas Sowell is available at www.tsowell.com.

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NCLB continued

state to another. This may be the most egregious contrast: Michigan identified 1,513 failing schools, while Arkansas had none—*zero*—it identified as failing.

And there are more numbers to cause head-scratching. For instance, Massachusetts had 259 failing schools, but West Virginia had only 13. Georgia had 625 failing schools, while neighboring South Carolina reported just 31.

> **"Vermont has slammed the door in the face of low-income parents."**
>
> LIBBY STERNBERG
> VERMONTERS FOR BETTER EDUCATION

High numbers could be a cause for legitimate pride, a sign a state takes standards seriously and sets the bar high. In Michigan, however, a coalition of public education groups is urging the state to lower the standards so as to cut the number of schools in need of improvement.

And might low numbers be the product of a state's hard work to raise the bar? When Virginia linked school accreditation to student achievement, most schools came up short. But after four years of intense focus on meeting the Standards of Learning, only 122 of 1,700 schools remain threatened with the loss of state accreditation. That may help explain why only 34 Title I schools in Virginia wound up on the NCLB sanctions list this summer.

The disparate and debatable numbers are a byproduct of lingering respect for local control. If the feds decreed uniform standards and assessments, Washington would be in charge of a national curriculum, which would violate the tenets of federalism. Still, the "goofy grades"—as the *Grand Rapids Press* dubbed them—raise doubts about early returns. It seems akin to the states taking an open-book test.

One Test

Eventually—after all states begin testing all children annually in grades 3-8—the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a gauge of student knowledge administered by a nonpartisan board since 1969, may generate enough comparative data to show which states are serious about standards and which are merely fooling their customers. That could encourage pro-reform activism state by state.

As for the NCLB's being a lever for choice, the impact could become more pronounced as growing numbers of districts are required to offer parents the option of selecting private providers of supplemental services, including those that are faith-based.

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is rholl1176@yahoo.com.

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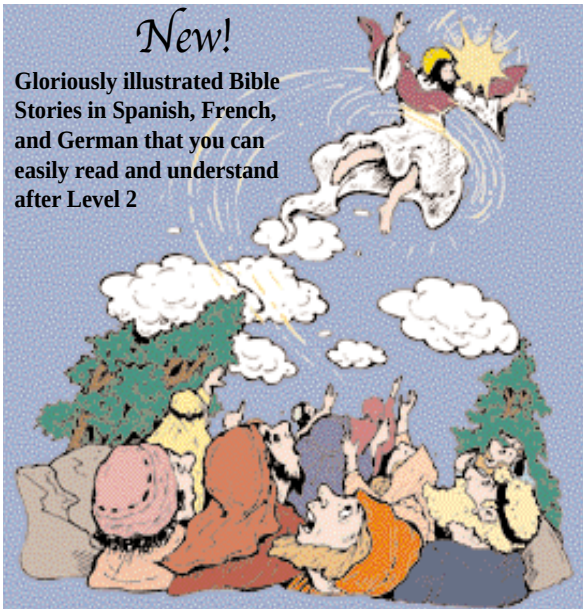

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The Friedman Report

About the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation

The Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization established in 1996 by Milton and Rose Friedman. The origins of the foundation lie in the Friedmans' long-standing concern about the serious deficiencies in America's elementary and secondary public schools. The best way to improve the quality of education, they believe, is to enable all parents to have a truly free choice of the schools that their children attend. The Friedman Foundation works to build upon this vision, clarify its meaning to the general public, and amplify the national call for true education reform through school choice. Contact us at *www.friedmanfoundation.org* for more information.

The Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation
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Indianapolis, IN 46282

BAEO Leader Wants Parents "Overwhelmed" with Opportunities

BY LAURA J. SWARTLEY

Betty Conley-Denton, founder of the Metropolitan Kansas City Chapter of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), is hopeful for a very changed educational landscape in her home city of Kansas City, Missouri in the next several years.

"I want a city where parental choice is a given," says Conley-Denton. "Traditional and non-traditional public schools will be of higher quality because of competition. Vouchers and tax credit programs supporting private and parochial schools will be accessible to all parents. Quality teachers will re-enter the market and aspire to participate in education in this city."

Conley-Denton, a mother of four and long-time public school activist who now is a proponent of school choice, believes these educational options will rejuvenate the inner city, which in turn will benefit all of Kansas City.

Conley-Denton was chair of the School Advisory Council of Westport Communication Magnet School in 1998, where her then 12-year-old daughter, Felicia, was a student. The school was threatened with closure because of high dropout rates and low test scores.

"The school had metal detectors and some of the students were really mean," explained Conley-Denton. Felicia loved the journalism concentration at the school, but struggled daily to fit in and feel safe. "This was the beginning of the changing of my traditional thought process about public schooling," said Conley-Denton.

In 2001, she became involved with BAEO after hearing BAEO founder and prominent school choice activist Dr. Howard Fuller speak. Concluding "it's not enough just to be a member of a national organization," Conley-Denton decided to found a local BAEO chapter. She attended BAEO leadership training in Dallas, Texas and completed the 15-step process to establish a new chapter.

Although Kansas City has many charter schools, Conley-Denton is dismayed at the lack of educational choices available to inner-city parents. She purchased an older home in the heart of Kansas City many years ago and feels she should not have to move to secure a better education for her children.

Two of her children—Bethanie and Newton—attend a charter school in Kansas City, but "in my quest to provide all my children with quality education, they have changed schools too many times," said Conley-Denton. She believes vouchers and tax credits would enable parents like her to afford private schools while remaining in their inner-city neighborhoods.

"I want parents to be overwhelmed with choices of quality education in this city," she said, instead of constantly being frustrated with the lack of educational options available to them now.

Foundations Apply New Dynamic to Education Reform

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

When charitable donors conclude that one of the organizations they support is mismanaged and its funds are not being used effectively, they are understandably reluctant to make further contributions to that organization, regardless of how much they may support its mission. This response is no different from that of for-profit investors who are averse to putting more of their money at risk when a promised return on investment in a particular venture fails to materialize. For example, no one considers Edison Schools entitled to more investor funds simply because it is involved in the good work of educating children.

However, when three Pittsburgh foundations announced in early July that they were suspending—immediately and indefinitely—all contributions to the Pittsburgh Public Schools because of a lack of confidence that the funds "will be used wisely," public school officials immediately claimed the foundations were "hurting the kids."

"They shouldn't use money as a threat," board president Jean Fink told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. "I don't like being blackmailed."

The three foundations—the Pittsburgh Foundation, the Heinz Endowments, and the Grable Foundation—didn't see it that way. Over the past five years, they have awarded $11.7 million to the district. While looking for their improvement efforts to be supported by a committed organization with consistent leadership and clear goals, what they found instead was "bickering, distrust, and chaotic decision making" in the top echelons of the Pittsburgh Public School system.

"The board is divided, the administration is embattled, key personnel are leaving or under attack, and morale appears to be devastatingly low," wrote foundation officials in a letter to school board members and Superintendent John Thompson. Citing a "sharp decline of governance, leadership, and fiscal discipline" in the district, the foundation officials said it would be "irresponsible" to continue support for the district at this time.

"As investors, we can no longer be confident that any funds we put into the district will be used wisely and to the maximum benefit of students," wrote Grable Foundation Executive Director Susan Brownlee, Heinz Endowments Executive Director Maxwell King, and Pittsburgh Foundation President and CEO William Trueheart.

"Our organizations will remain engaged in efforts by the larger community to create an effective management and governance structure for the district," declared the three foundation officials. "Until that happens, however, we will not fund the Pittsburgh Public Schools."

According to *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* columnist Sally Kalson, the educational needs of the city's 38,000 public school children already have taken a back seat to the spectacle of board members and superintendent "bashing each other." The foundations have tried, without success, to get the district's leadership back on track. "But some people cannot be moved by reason," noted Kalson, and the foundations' latest action is like "hitting a stubborn mule upside the head with a 2-by-4: First, you have to get its attention."

For more information…

WWW The letter written by the foundation officials to Pittsburgh Public School board members is available on the Internet at **http://www.post-gazette.com/downloads/20020710letter.pdf**.

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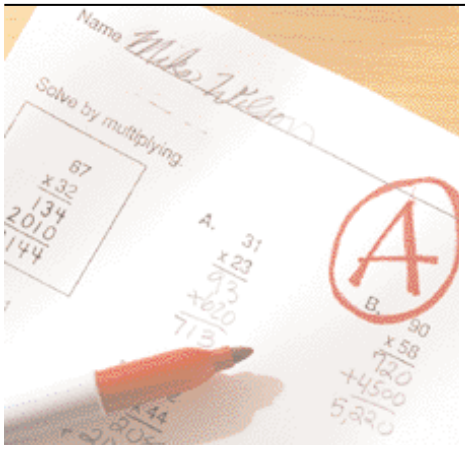

School Choice Roundup

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

ALABAMA

Private School Attendance Up

The share of Alabama schoolchildren attending private schools increased from 8 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2000, according to the latest data from the U.S. Census. While a greater percentage of white students (15 percent) attend private schools than black students (3 percent), the survey shows many black parents in urban areas now are choosing a private school for their children. For example, almost 6 percent of black children attend private schools in Jefferson County, which includes the mostly black Birmingham school system.

John Dolly, dean of the College of Education at the University of Alabama, told *The Montgomery Advertiser* that the recent increases in private school enrollment may be because both black and white middle-income parents share the same dissatisfaction with public schools. Both sets of parents want the same thing, he said: "a good education for their children."

The proportion of white students in rural areas who attend private schools hasn't changed since at least 1980, according to Annette Watters, director of the Alabama Data Center at the University of Alabama. However, she argued it was the quality of academics more than race that was increasing private school attendance in urban areas.

"Parents expect their children to attend quality schools, and if the public schools are marginal or on probation or insufficient to your standards, what is your alternative?" she asked *The Montgomery Advertiser*. "One alternative is to send them to private schools where you can have a bigger voice in what you want."

The Montgomery Advertiser
August 19, 2002

COLORADO

Vouchers for College Students?

Colorado distributes millions of dollars to each state university campus in general fund operating revenues. What if that money were distributed instead as a $4,300 tuition voucher to each of the 123,000 high school graduates in Colorado who plan to attend college?

That innovative option, which would be the first in the nation, was discussed on June 28 by a Blue Ribbon Panel on Higher Education appointed by Governor Bill Owens.

"I think we would be on the cutting edge," panel chairman Bruce Benson told *The Rocky Mountain News*. "With the Supreme Court ruling [on June 27] on K-12 vouchers, it does kind of say it is OK."

The Rocky Mountain News
June 29, 2002

ILLINOIS

Gubernatorial Candidate Endorses Voucher Plan

After a state panel leaked its proposal for higher statewide income and sales taxes to provide more funds for Illinois public schools, Libertarian gubernatorial candidate Cal Skinner in late August endorsed a revenue-neutral school voucher plan developed by The Heartland Institute.

Starting with kindergarten and first grade, the plan would phase in two additional grades per year over a seven-year period and provide each student with a voucher for use at private schools. The value of the voucher would be determined by the operating expense of the student's school district divided by the total number of eligible students in the district.

Skinner, a former GOP state legislator with a reputation for advocating tax reform, questioned the whole idea of increasing state aid to the public schools, noting state aid had been increased by 45 percent over a four-year period with no discernable effect on the quality of the public schools.

"It's time to look at new ideas that can work, not to recycle tax hikes with no realistic prospect of improving our children's education," said Skinner, arguing that competition—not more money—is the way to improve education.

The Heartland Plan would enhance local control not only by placing the responsibility for education decisions squarely in the hands of parents, but also by requiring a local referendum to authorize implementation of the plan in a specific school district. Private schools would be able to charge more than the voucher amount, with parents paying the difference. Where schools charged less than the voucher amount, the savings would be placed in a K-16 Education Savings Account for the student in question.

While Skinner's Republican opponent, Attorney General Jim Ryan, has been non-committal on vouchers, his Democratic opponent, Congressman Rod Blagojevich, opposes them.

Skinner4Governor Campaign

For more information…

WWW details of The Heartland Plan for Illinois and other model voucher legislation are available at: **www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artID=10211#legislation**.

KENTUCKY

Private Schools Increase Share of Enrollments

Private schools in Kentucky substantially increased their share of K-12 enrollment over the past decade, according to calculations performed by *School Reform News* on new estimates from the 2000 U.S. Census. The calculations show Kentucky's private school share of enrollment increased from 8.6 percent in 1990 to 11.7 percent in 2000.

When individual U.S. Census 2000 estimates for public and private school enrollment in Kentucky are combined, they show a total enrollment figure of 738,747 K-12 students, an increase of 12.6 percent compared to the total enrollment figure from the 1990 Census. While public and private school enrollment in the Blue Grass State both increased from 1990 to 2000, they did so at markedly different rates: Public school enrollment increased 8.8 percent to 652,151, while private school enrollment increased 53.2 percent to 86,596.

Since the census estimates come from one in six households, they are likely to provide a close estimate of public school enrollment. But the census questions did not inquire about homeschooling, meaning the private school estimates could include some of the more than 13,000 homeschooled students in Kentucky, whose numbers are growing at nearly 10 percent a year.

"I think you're seeing a whole new generation of people who chose private and home schools well before their children were of school age," homeschool advocate Martin Cothran told the *Lexington Herald-Leader*. "People don't perceive the public schools are focusing on academics the way they ought to, and there's the religious aspect."

Religious convictions and passage of the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act caused more parents to choose private schools or homeschooling for their children, according to Scott County pupil personnel director Danny Glass.

Lexington Herald-Leader
August 20, 2002

OHIO

Cleveland Sees Jump in Voucher Applications

Within two days of the U.S. Supreme Court's June 27 decision, which declared the Cleveland voucher program constitutional, the Ohio Department of Education received 40 new applications for vouchers in Cleveland. By the July 31 deadline, the number of first-time applications had risen to 2,200, up 10 percent over the previous year.

The state will make 5,523 vouchers available this year, an increase of 22.7 percent over last year's 4,500. However, the number of private schools that will accept vouchers will remain around 50, and some may have no more seats available.

The program has no income limits, but low-income families earning less than 200 percent of the poverty level will be given priority. Vouchers will not be taken away from families with higher incomes who received vouchers in prior years. For example, 72 percent of last year's vouchers went to low-income families, with the balance going to higher-income applicants.

The participation of higher-income families in the program—albeit at a reduced funding level—doesn't bother Cleveland City Council member Fannie Lewis, a voucher supporter.

"It should be open to all people," she told *The Plain Dealer*. "When you talk about higher income, you have to look at what people need to do with that income."

The Plain Dealer
August 13, 2002

WISCONSIN

School Transfer Requests Up 24 Percent

An open enrollment program started five years ago received 11,812 applications this year—an increase of 24 percent over last year—from parents who want their children educated at schools outside the district where they live. The state's largest school district—the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS)—generated by far the largest number of transfer requests, some 2,505. There were only 11 applications to transfer into the district.

Under the open enrollment program, students can attend any public school district in the Badger State, if there are seats available. Participation has almost doubled since 1998-99, when there were 5,946 transfers. In Milwaukee, city students are allowed to attend suburban schools, with busing provided. A reciprocal provision allows suburban students to attend city schools.

"We consider that as an additional choice for kids," MPS spokesperson Mark Hoffman told *Pioneer Press*.

Pioneer Press (Minneapolis)
August 26, 2002

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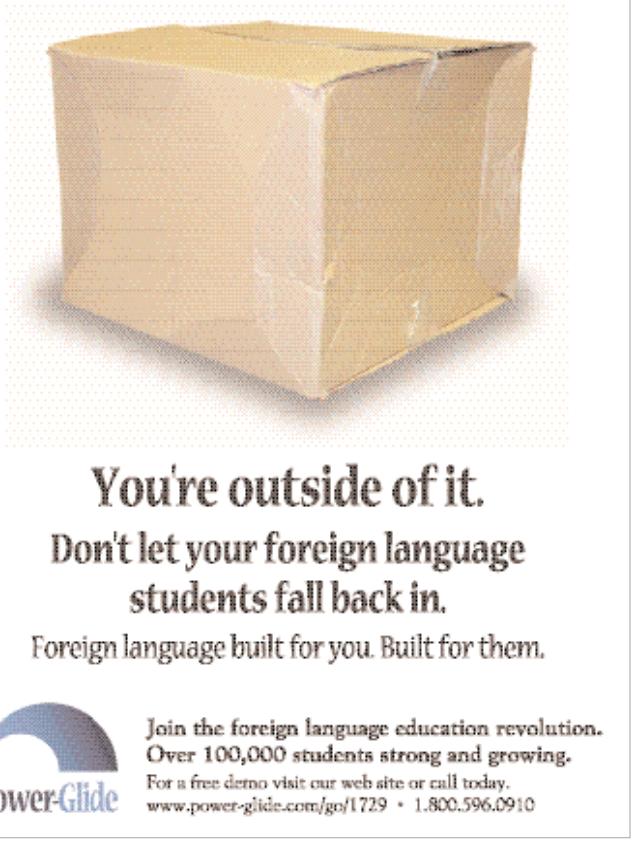
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Voucher Advocate Takes Charge at Children First America

In August, Tampa businessman and leading school choice advocate John Kirtley was named president and CEO of Children First America (CFA), a school choice organization formed 10 years ago to extend nationwide the privately funded scholarship model created by business leaders J. Patrick Rooney in Indianapolis and Peter Flanigan in New York City.

The appointment of Kirtley was the first act of newly appointed CFA board chairman Rick Sharp, Virginia business leader and former Circuit City chairman.

"I am confident that John and his staff will achieve great things in the fight for educational freedom," said Sharp, pointing to Kirtley's proven record of achievement in Florida.

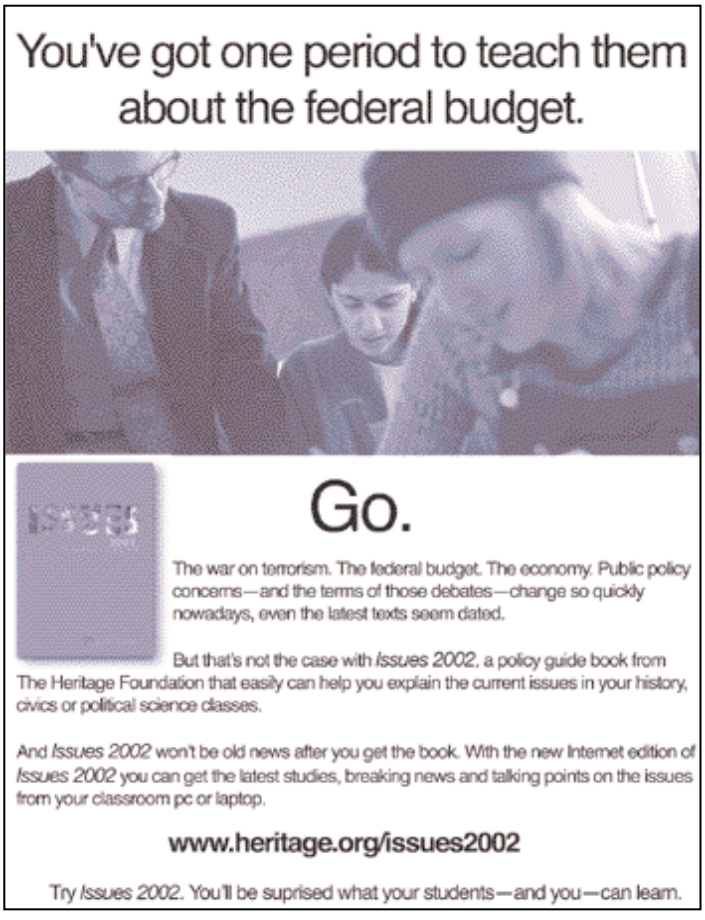
Kirtley is a cofounder of the Tampa-based venture capital firm FCP Investors. He helped found and develop several private scholarship efforts in Florida, and he has worked closely with CFA and other school choice advocates to boost school choice not only in Florida but around the nation. He was most recently involved in the effort to create Florida's corporate tax credit program to encourage private funding of K-12 scholarships.

CFA's aim is to win educational freedom for America's parents so they can exercise their fundamental right to choose the school they think is best for their child, be it public, private, or parochial. The organization, based in Bentonville, Arkansas, pursues a three-part strategy to achieve this:

- encourage and support the formation of school choice scholarship programs funded by private citizens;
- support school choice parents across the nation as they organize and work for change;
- educate and inform policy leaders at the local, state, and federal levels on the issue to make them more effective.

As a result of the organization's efforts, today there are more than 100 privately funded choice programs formed and operating in 39 states and the District of Columbia. More than a half-billion dollars has been invested in these programs over a 10-year period to serve more than 100,000 children. Many of these programs have been designed in such a way as to support high-quality research into many different aspects of educational choice.

"I have no doubt that the achievements of our organization to this point will serve as a foundation for a greater growth of parental freedom in education," said retiring CFA President Fritz Steiger, who had informed the CFA board earlier this year of his intention to return to the private sector.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Illinois Court Upholds Parental Rights

BY STEVE MERICAN

Saying the law violates the due process rights of a surviving parent, the Illinois Supreme Court in April struck down a state statute giving grandparents the right to sue for visitation rights to their grandchildren when one parent is deceased. This aspect of the law had remained an open question after the court ruled in 2000 that the law was unconstitutional when both parents were alive.

The case, *Wickham v. Byrne*, involved consolidated cases in which a surviving parent was at odds with grandparents of the deceased parent over visitation. Under the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act, a court is permitted to grant visitation to a grandparent when one parent is deceased, if doing so is in the best interest of the child. In this case, two trial court decisions had assigned the grandparents more visitation with the child than the surviving parent wished to grant.

The Supreme Court ruled the statute violated the parent's due process rights because it "places the parent on equal footing with the party seeking visitation rights" and "contravenes the traditional presumption that parents are fit and act in the best interests of their children."

The Court ruled a parent's due process rights were violated by the statute because it "exposes the decision of a fit parent to the unfettered value judgment of a judge and the intrusive micromanagement of the state."

The Court recognized parents and grandparents can both have the best interests of the child at heart, but also that "a fit parent's constitutionally protected liberty interest to direct the care, custody, and control of his or her children mandates that parents—not judges—should be the ones to decide with whom their children will and will not associate."

This ruling provides strong support for parents' rights, and makes the point that some disputes are not for government and judges to decide.

For more information…

WWW The Illinois Supreme Court decision in *Wickham v. Byrne, Docket Nos. 92048, 92135 (4/18/02)* is available on the Internet at **http://www.state.il.us/court/Opinions**.

Steven R. Merican is a lawyer whose practice concentrates on individual liberty issues. His email address is merican@abanet.org, and his Web site is at www.illinoislocalcounsel.com.

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Ready or Not, Education Is Changing

EDVentures 2002 teems with entrepreneurs, ideas, excitement

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

More than 360 education entrepreneurs, investors, computer specialists, writers, foundation staff, and policy experts gathered on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia on July 25-27 for the EDVentures 2002 Conference, organized by the Association of Education Practitioners and Providers.

The timely theme of the conference—"Education as you know it is finally changing"—was established before the U.S. Supreme Court's favorable June 27 ruling on vouchers, and before the City of Brotherly Love became the site of one of the nation's largest experiments in contracting out educational services.

"I can think of no economic, moral, political, or social reason why the government should maintain an effective monopoly over secondary and primary education," Philadelphia School Reform Council member Daniel Whelan told conference attendees. Whelan is president and CEO of Verizon of Pennsylvania.

The challenges faced by new educational options like charter schools, home schooling, and private school vouchers are "the growing pains of an organization that needs change," according to Scott Clegg, president and COO of Nobel Learning Communities, the largest operator of private schools in the U.S. We are in the latest phase of the evolution of education, he explained, shifting from the idea of mass education to more individualized education.

That point was most evident in a conference session on cyber-charter schools, an area where Pennsylvania is leading the nation, according to panelist Melanie Burke Reiser from the state's Charter School Resource Center. With cyber-schools, the traditional classroom model of variable learning within a fixed time period is superseded by an individualized model of fixed learning within a variable time frame, explained panelist Gregg Vanourek of K12, Inc.

"Virtual schools are helping to redefine public education," said Vanourek. "Education is no longer a function of your Zip Code."

Unwanted Students

Education isn't a function of state lines, either, for high school students in Midland School District in western Pennsylvania, who attend public school a few miles away in East Liverpool City School District in Ohio. Midland's high school was closed after the local steel mill closed in the 1980s, but nearby districts didn't want the Midland students. The Ohio district agreed to take them.

When EDVentures panelist Nick Trombetta became Midland's superintendent in 1995, he was concerned about what would happen to the high school students if the Ohio district decided not to take them any longer. He called a group of experts together to come up with possible solutions, and one speaker suggested a cyber-charter school. So Trombetta set up the Western Pennsylvania Charter School as a safety net for his Midland students, anticipating about 25 students would enroll.

But when the school was launched, 150 children from outside the district applied, swelling to more than 500 by year's end. Since he didn't want to be hypocritical by refusing to accept students from outside the district, Trombetta decided to take the out-of-district students. His school became the first statewide charter school in Pennsylvania. It now enrolls 1,500 students. However, until legislators recently settled the issue in favor of Midland, superintendents in the sending districts fought the idea of sending as much as $11,000 per student to the small western Pennsylvania district.

"The debate about cyber-charter schools is not about education," Trombetta told EDVentures 2002 attendees. "It's about who pays for it."

With two conference sessions dealing with international issues, education no longer seems even to be a function of national boundaries. Topics covered in other sessions included private school development, tutoring, charter school financing, the issue of for-profit vs. not-for-profit, investing in education, the role of entrepreneurship in education, special education services from the private sector, online learning, technology in the classroom, multi-site ownership issues, accountability, student achievement, school improvement programs, and details of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Tutoring

One of the best-attended sessions was titled, "So You Are Thinking About Starting an Education Business," which provided the perspectives of four businessmen running successful tutoring firms: Nick Imperato, who started a Sylvan Learning Center in New Jersey; Cliff Richmond, who started Richmond Tutors in Tennessee; Jim Giovannini, who started the Scholastic Tutoring Center in Illinois; and the chairman of the session, Dan Ascher, who started the A+ Tutoring Service in Philadelphia.

Through a wide-ranging discussion of scope of services, marketing, independent contractors vs. employees, screening tutors, and finding quality tutors, all agreed that delivering a quality product was "providing quality at all times." Despite the 12 to 14 hour days and six-day weeks, the entrepreneurs obviously got a great deal of satisfaction out of their work.

"We get to see success in children who don't normally succeed," summarized Imperato.

Imperato also pointed out the importance of communicating frequently with parents. He contrasted this with the public schools the children attended, where parents often hadn't been told anything about why their child was a year or more behind in reading or math. He said about half of his students come to the Center to improve their reading ability—both in mechanics and comprehension—while another 30 percent come for help in math.

Students from Chesterbrook Academy Elementary School, a Nobel Learning Communities school, sing for the attendees of EDVentures 2002 in the University of Pennsylvania's Hall of Flags.

For more information…

WWW Audiotapes of most EDVentures 2002 sessions are available from Master Duplicators of Garden Grove, California. A listing of the sessions and an order form are available at the AEPP Web site at **www.aepp.org/2002tapeorder.pdf**.

Entrepreneurial Leadership Award

Todd Parchman and Jack Clegg, AEPP President, present the James P. Boyle Entrepreneurial Leadership Award to Ellyn Lerner, president of KIDS1, Inc., at EDVentures 2002 in Philadelphia.

AEPP's 2002 James P. Boyle Entrepreneurial Leadership Award was presented to Dr. Ellyn Lerner, president of KIDS 1, Inc., which operates specialized private schools and related services for students facing learning and social challenges. The company serves more than 800 special-needs students in 20 schools and learning centers in California, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, and the District of Colombia.

Lerner, who has more than 25 years' experience working directly with special-needs students, cofounded the company's first school in 1986 to serve students with disabilities. She has written articles on special education and has created proprietary approaches to developing reading skills in severely dyslexic populations.

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Together, We Can Do It

AN INTERVIEW WITH
U.S. SENATOR
GEORGE V. VOINOVICH
BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

"Together, we can do it."

That was U.S. Senator George V. Voinovich's motto when, at the request of local community leaders, he resigned the job of lieutenant governor of Ohio and took over as mayor of the bankrupt City of Cleveland in 1979.

Applying the maxim to the problem at hand, Voinovich developed a series of coalitions and public-private partnerships that halted the downslide and shifted the city on to a path back to prosperity and renewed civic pride. By the time Voinovich stepped down in 1988, Cleveland was thriving and he had been named one of the nation's top mayors. Two years later, he was Governor of Ohio.

Voinovich's motto—or its obverse, "On our own, we can do nothing"—should perhaps be the motto of every state legislator, since new proposals can be enacted into law only after they have been lifted over a long sequence of procedural hurdles by the majority votes of different groups of legislators. This process guarantees that only measures with broad and deep support pass readily. Measures with narrower or shallower support require active legislative champions to maintain the majorities necessary at every hurdle.

Voinovich became the legislative champion for school choice in January 1995, when he announced a school voucher plan as part of a package of statewide education reforms. The Ohio Legislature chose to limit the school choice plan to the troubled Cleveland Public Schools system and approved the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program later that year.

For his efforts in achieving that victory, Voinovich rightly earned the title of "father of the Cleveland school choice program." Since 1996, some 4,300 students have taken advantage of the program to seek a better education in private schools.

Government should work just as hard with the tax dollars it gets as taxpayers have to work to earn those dollars, Voinovich believes. The way to do this, he contends, is to keep government spending down and ensure that government programs and systems are well-managed and deliver the best services for their dollar. Voinovich has used his motto of "Together, we can do it" to encourage federal agencies and Ohio government agencies to work together, both for efficiency and to provide better services.

Voinovich's first stint as an elected official was as a member of the Ohio House of Representatives from 1967 to 1971. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Government from Ohio University in 1958 and graduated from the College of Law at Ohio State University in 1961. Currently two-thirds through his first term in the U.S. Senate, Voinovich spoke recently with *School Reform News* Managing Editor George Clowes.

photo credit: http://philip.greenspun.com

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Clowes: *Although several governors have tried to get voucher programs approved, only you, Tommy Thompson, and Jeb Bush have succeeded. What strategy did you pursue to achieve passage of the Cleveland voucher program?*

Voinovich: The most important thing was that I created the Governor's Education Management Council to look at reforms that needed to be undertaken in Ohio to improve our education system and to make a greater difference in the lives of our youngsters. As part of that, we put together a school choice task force, called the Commission on Educational Choice. On that task force, I had individuals who had differences of opinion, including one in particular who was opposed to vouchers. I wanted to have a representative group of people to do an objective review of whether or not they thought school choice was something we ought to put on our smorgasbord of education opportunities.

When the Commission on Educational Choice came back, they recommended school vouchers as an option they thought would provide an opportunity for children—particularly those from low-income areas—to get out of low-performing schools and better their educational opportunities. Based on that recommendation, we introduced several pieces of legislation. They didn't go very far. They were lobbied heavily against, as you can imagine, by the various groups opposed to school vouchers.

"The non-public schools are a good yardstick in terms of what they are able to get done compared with what the public school system gets done."

Then, in 1995, I introduced a comprehensive program for improving schools, and a voucher program in Cleveland was part of it. I had originally asked that the voucher option be given to any school district in the state as a choice, to give them a chance to try it out, if they so desired.

But, finally, the only way we were able to get it done was to restrict vouchers to just the Cleveland area. Some of the legislators there were being pressured very heavily for it. The rationale was that the Cleveland system was in such bad shape and taking so much money out of the state that we ought to give them this opportunity to see if vouchers would make a difference. So we put it in place, and the first class of students went in in 1996 ... and, of course, the rest is history.

At the time I did it, I got an enormous amount of flak from a whole lot of people, but my view was that it was constitutional. The money wasn't going to the school, it was going to the individual, just like the GI Bill. I also felt this was a reasonable educational program we ought to be trying out. The problem in government today, right across the board, is that we are not willing, as businesses, to try new things. Too often, the reason we don't try new things is because there are strong lobbies trying to preserve their turf. I just felt the voucher program was something we ought to look at, and, needless to say, I was very pleased when the Supreme Court ruled that it was constitutional.

Clowes: *Which groups were involved in getting the voucher legislation approved?*

Voinovich: To be very candid with you, the people who were on the original Commission on Educational Choice were very, very effective because they were highly regarded as being objective people who were concerned about educational improvement. I'd be less than candid if I didn't say that the leader of that group was David Brennan, who really spent a great deal of time promoting the voucher plan in the state legislature along with his colleagues. And of course, we had some legislators, too, who believed in it as strongly as I did. For example, people like Bill Batchelder and a few others really made it a *cause celebre* and helped me carry the ball across the goal line.

I also had to personally get involved in it. It was the only time that year that I went to the respective caucuses—both the House and Senate Republican caucuses—to really appeal to them on the importance of moving forward with the voucher initiative and giving me the support I needed to get it done.

Clowes: *Does your support for parental choice come out of your philosophy or did it come out of your experience as mayor of Cleveland—or perhaps both?*

Voinovich: I've always felt that having more options was the best thing. My children were in Montessori school—a store-front Montessori school, in fact; they also went to the Cleveland public schools; and a couple of them went to private school for high school.

I have always been a strong supporter of the non-public school system in Ohio, because I felt they were doing a terrific job. The non-public schools are a good yardstick in terms of what they are able to get done compared with what the public school system gets done.

If you look at the record, I think Ohio does more to support non-public schools than any other state in the nation. I started that effort with our Auxiliary Services Program when I was back in the legislature in 1966. On the average, our non-public schools in Ohio get about $750-$800 per student for auxiliary services and for reimbursement for state-imposed costs. And it's all constitutional.

There's also the old competition issue: If you've got a product and there's no other product available, sometimes you don't promote the product and do as well with it as you could. But with competition, you start to pay more attention to how well you do because customers have a choice.

Speaking of Cleveland, one of the things we did when I was mayor of Cleveland—and before that when I was a legislator—was to create a new governance model in Cleveland where the mayor appoints the superintendent and where the school board members are appointed from a categorical list that's put together from people of different areas of responsibility.

Clowes: *Now that you're at the federal level, I'd like to ask you a couple of questions. First, is any significant school choice legislation likely to be approved for the District of Columbia?*

Voinovich: Let me just say this: Number one, I believe that this is a state issue, and not a federal issue. I'm not for the federal government coming in and foisting their ideas about education upon the states. I voted against the recent education bill because I'm very against federalizing education in this country. Education is primarily a state and local responsibility. It certainly wasn't envisioned by the framers of our constitution as a federal issue, and so I have strong feelings in that regard. This is a state matter, not a federal matter.

In terms of the District of Columbia, I think the District ought to decide what they should do. For example, people like Donald Graham of *The Washington Post*, who really cares about education, helped me get the College Access Program passed for the District. That's a program that provides tuition subsidies for District residents to attend college. Now that the Supreme Court has ruled vouchers constitutional, I'm sure we'll be encouraging the District to look at them.

Clowes: *My second question is in reference to other federal education programs like Head Start and Title I. Audits seem to indicate we're not getting very good mileage out of these programs, even though they're well-intentioned.*

Voinovich: I don't agree. Another thing I did in Ohio was to make Ohio the leader in Head Start in the United States of America. Every eligible child in Ohio has a slot in early preschool education, if the parents want the child to be in it. If there's any problem with Head Start, it's because we are not getting the kind of teachers that we need for those early childhood programs.

To address that, I got legislation passed to provide scholarships for people who go into early childhood education. I also got legislation passed to increase requirements for the people who are teaching in that area. By 2005, I think, everybody teaching in early childhood will have to have an Associate's degree.

I think the early childhood education has been a very, very good experience for children and their families. Families must be involved, and it's had a very big impact on the families. For instance, every year the governor gives away awards in conjunction with the Ohio Newspaper Association. In two instances, I gave the award to former Head Start moms who got inspired with the program, went on to get more education, and ended up with Ph.D.s. Can you imagine—Head Start moms?

"[W]ith competition, you start to pay more attention to how well you do because customers have a choice."

I'm a very strong supporter of 0-3 education, too. I think the most neglected area in education in this country today is 0-3. It's the area that has the most impact on a child's development. In terms of Title I, I've encouraged school superintendents and others to take Title I money and put it into pre-school and 0-3 education, because, frankly, by the time some of these children get help from Title I, it's too late.

What I'm trying to say to you is that the area that can make the most difference in the lives of children today in the United States of America is 0-3 education, and it's the area that gets the least amount of resources.

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For more information…

WWW on the newspaper industry, including circulation figures and readership demographics, visit the Newspaper Association of America's Web site at **http://www.naa.org/info/facts00/**.

For an introduction to the OECD literacy report, "Education Policy Analysis 2001," including a link to the report, see John Gehring, "U.S. Seen Losing Edge On Education Measures," *Education Week*, April 4, 2001 (at **www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=29oecd.h20&keywords=OECD**)

Further details of the OECD report are available from the OECD Web site at **www1.oecd.org/els/ministerial/**.

NEWSPAPERS continued from page 1

Kling deemed the numbers so grim he predicted "the newspaper business is going to die within the next 20 years. Newspaper publishing will continue, but only as a philanthropic venture."

Kling's concern was triggered by data from the Newspaper Association of America (NAA), which calculated spending on newspapers by age group. The highest spending relative to the general population came from 65- to 74-year-olds, who spent 136 percent of the national average on newspaper subscriptions or single-copy purchases. The lowest spending on newspapers came from the 18- to 24-year-olds, who spent just 25 percent of the national average.

Of course, it's always been true that people begin to subscribe to newspapers more readily as they grow older. The meaningful comparison, therefore, is between newspaper reading by young persons today and in years past.

Peter Franchese, founder of *American Demographics Magazine*, has recently done just such a study. His findings: 63 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds bought newspapers in 1985. By 1995, that figure had fallen to 56 percent. By 2000, it had plummeted to 35 percent.

Noted TechCentral Station's Kling, "on a cohort basis, newspaper readership among young adults has fallen by over 50 percent in 15 years. ... In an industry that depends on economies of scale to overcome high fixed costs, a decline in volume that approaches 50 percent is going to be fatal. These demographic effects will slowly but inexorably kill the newspaper business."

Not all analysts are so pessimistic. Media consultant Sidney Goldberg delivered a riposte on TechCentral Station's Web site, asserting newspapers will "very much be around in 20 years." In his view, the bleak forecasts fail to take into account future technology that will enable newspapers in the Internet Age to deliver their product electronically in a portable, reader-friendly format.

Stu Tolley, president of the research firm that crunched the numbers for the NAA, concluded, "the major change in newspaper reading is the drop in frequency of reading. It is not that great numbers of people have completely stopped reading the paper. They just read less often. It is the daily paper, not the Sunday, that has lost the most and it is the six dailies per week, not the Sunday paper, that bring in the most revenue."

Tolley says a straight-line projection indicates by the year 2078, at the latest, there would be an end to daily newspaper reading in the United States. However, that outcome is not inevitable. By doing a better job of discovering and providing what their occasional readers want, newspapers might stave off this trend.

Why Don't They Read?

Clearly the biggest challenge lies with the young population, where readership declines have been dramatic. Many analyses focus on why young people don't *want* to read.

An MTV Networks survey found 14- to 24-year-olds ranked music as their favorite topic to read about, but they perceived newspapers put music at the bottom of their priority lists and politics at the top. That raises an interesting policy question for newspapers' corporate boardrooms: Should newspaper executives bring their product to the MTV level in order to raise revenues?

The OECD data showing the decline of literacy among recent high school graduates in the U.S., and the NAEP data showing failures to teach reading in primary grades, suggest the problem goes far deeper than reading material preference. Many young people are leaving school or even graduating unable to read proficiently. That is a threat not only to the newspaper industry, but to the survival of America's democratic experiment.

Newspaper editorialists have been known to scoff at parents who demand schools return to such "pre-modern" basics as the use of phonics in beginning reading. Those columnists might want to reconsider whether they themselves are the real dinosaurs. After all, whose existence is imperiled by the asteroid named illiteracy?

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is rholl1176@yahoo.com.

Already Booming, Tutoring Receives Large NCLB Boost

BY ROBERT HOLLAND

In search of the best possible education, Americans already spend more than $5 billion a year on private tutoring. Now, with tutoring options included in the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) education reform, the area is sure to become more of a growth enterprise than ever.

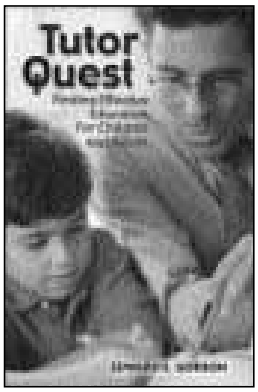
The U.S. Department of Education (DoEd) estimates NCLB will pump an additional $1 billion per year into public funding for tutoring. Many education consumers consider tutoring essential to filling in intellectual gaps left by modern schooling. A *Newsweek* poll in 1999 showed 42 percent of adults are convinced a "great need" exists for children to receive private tutoring outside school.

Encouragement for tutoring is part of NCLB's emphasis on giving a greater range of options to families of children stuck in chronically failing federally subsidized schools. After a public school has failed for two straight years to make adequate progress toward meeting the state's standards, low-income families are supposed to be offered the choice of a better-performing public school and a free ride to it. However, public schools so far are providing little real choice. (See related article, "Schools Serve NCLB Choice in Tiny Portions," page 1).

With a third year of failure, NCLB requires that school districts let parents use up to $1,000 of their Title I subsidy to purchase "supplemental services," such as private tutoring. School officials must furnish parents a list of providers who have a "demonstrated record of effectiveness," according to DoEd guidelines. This opening to private help could become the first genuine school choice directly aided by federal funds.

New Book May Help

Families in search of a reliable tutor may want to obtain a new book by Dr. Edward E. Gordon, *Tutor Quest: Finding Effective Education for Children and Adults* ($10.95; Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation; Bloomington, Indiana; 2002). Gordon is president of the Chicago-based Imperial Consulting Corporation, whose tutoring division—launched by Gordon in 1968—was the first such service to be accredited in the United States by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.



Tutor Quest provides detailed information for education consumers seeking to find the best tutor for their needs. Gordon analyzes 10 different types of tutoring programs found in most communities. Volunteer nonprofit tutors do about 30 percent of the tutoring in the U.S. each year. Teachers or groups of teachers do another 30 percent, while 34 percent of tutoring comes in the form of university clinics, workforce programs, and peer tutoring, where children teach other children. Franchised tutoring centers handle from 3 to 6 percent of students tutored each year.

Prices for professional tutoring range from $20 to $75 per hour for private home tutoring to $40 to $60 per hour for services at a tutoring center. Gordon provides a checklist of questions to ask a prospective tutor, and a rating scale to use after the questions have been answered. This valuable guide also contains a National Tutoring Resource Directory with program descriptions for both fee-based and volunteer programs. There also is information about the fast-emerging field of cyber-tutoring on the Internet.

Gordon offers case studies compiled from his 30 years' experience with tutoring. Among the most interesting are his observations on helping children with learning disabilities, specifically those diagnosed with "attention deficit hyperactivity disorder" (ADHD). Gordon's experience leads him to believe a majority of ADHD children have a "combination of various learning disabilities that have been either incorrectly diagnosed or improperly treated." He has found that a carefully sequenced tutoring program—i.e., visual or auditory training followed by remedial reading followed by individual/family counseling—often results in symptoms of hyperactivity fading away and the child becoming a successful classroom learner.

As tutoring becomes a key element in empowering parents to choose the best educational opportunities for their children, the practical advice of practitioners like Ed Gordon is sure to be widely sought.

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is rholl1176@yahoo.com.

For more information…

WWW A state-by-state listing of tutoring services that are members of the Association for Education Providers and Practitioners is posted at the Association's Web site at **www.aepp.org/marketplace/results.cfm?type=6**.

Further information on Edward E. Gordon's book, *Tutor Quest: Finding Effective Education for Children and Adults*, is available at **www.tutorquest.info**. The book is also available through Amazon.com at **http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0873678400/theheartlandinst**.

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If the Curriculum Has No Content, What's Left to Teach?

Although U.S. K-12 education has proven remarkably impervious to efforts aimed at structural reform, efforts aimed at *curriculum* reform have been much more successful. Significant changes have been incorporated into both textbooks and tests over the past three decades.

What has emerged from these efforts is a curriculum not with a particular content, but one that is free of content, according to prominent education historian Diane Ravitch, who was an Assistant Education Secretary in the first Bush administration.

Writing in "Education After the Culture Wars," which appears in the Summer 2002 issue of *Daedalus*, Ravitch reports the new "contentless" curriculum is built on the following assumptions:

- America has no common culture worth speaking of.
- There are no literary works that all students should read.
- Memorizing historical facts is nothing more than "rote learning."

"Once the very idea of mastering a specific set of facts and texts was discredited, there was nothing left to teach but various methods, such as 'basic skills,' 'discovery learning,' 'critical thinking,' and 'problem solving,'" explains Ravitch.

With "self-righteous pedagogical censors" also making sure schoolchildren encounter only texts that meet a daunting list of guidelines for including multiculturalism and excluding all kinds of perceived bias, Ravitch questions how it is possible to "transmit our culture to the younger generation."

It isn't, according to the experience of college instructor Mark Goldblatt, who has taught freshman classes at CUNY and SUNY colleges in New York City for the past two decades. Goldblatt concludes the students he now encounters "have been robbed" of "their entrée into serious cultural debate." These are "bright kids, talented kids, curious kids," but they are "utterly ignorant of their own ignorance," he reports.

"Want to scare yourself?" asks Goldblatt in his article in *National Review Online*. "Sit down with a half-dozen recent public high-school graduates and ask them what they believe."

"Most are utterly convinced, for example, that President Kennedy was murdered by a vast government conspiracy," he writes. "It doesn't matter to them that they cannot name the presidents before or after Kennedy. Or the three branches of government. ... Or report the number of judges on the Supreme Court. ... Most will happily hold forth on the hypocrisy of organized religion—even though they cannot name the first book of the Bible. Or distinguish between the Old and New Testaments. Or state the approximate year of Jesus's birth (a trick question). Most will bemoan global warming—even though they cannot name three greenhouse gases ..."

> **"What has emerged from [three decades of reform] is a curriculum not with a particular content, but one that is free of content, according to prominent education historian Diane Ravitch."**

For more information...

WWW Diane Ravitch's article in *Daedalus*, "Education After the Culture Wars" is available at **http://daedalus.amacad.org/issues/summer2002/ravitch.pdf**.

Mark Goldblatt's article in *National Review Online*, "Other Opiates: What Kids Know," is available at **http://nationalreview.com/comment/comment-goldblatt090302.asp**.

Diane Ravitch, Susan Wise Bauer, and John Taylor Gatto all have addressed the curriculum issue in interviews with *School Reform News*. These interviews are available at **http://www.heartland.org/IssueSuiteTopic.cfm?issId=3&istId=148.**

The Texas Public Policy Foundation recently conducted a review of new social studies textbooks and found them only "lightly seasoned with history." More details of the study are available at the Foundation's Web site at **www.tppf.org**.

Latest Test Scores Show Value of Tough Curriculum

But grade inflation means A-rated students now score lower

Good news on student performance: This year, 41 percent of high school students who took the SAT test had an A grade point average, compared to only 31 percent 10 years ago.

Bad news on grade inflation: This year's students with an A grade point average scored only 565 on the Verbal SAT test, compared to 575 scored by A students 10 years ago. (See Figure 1.)

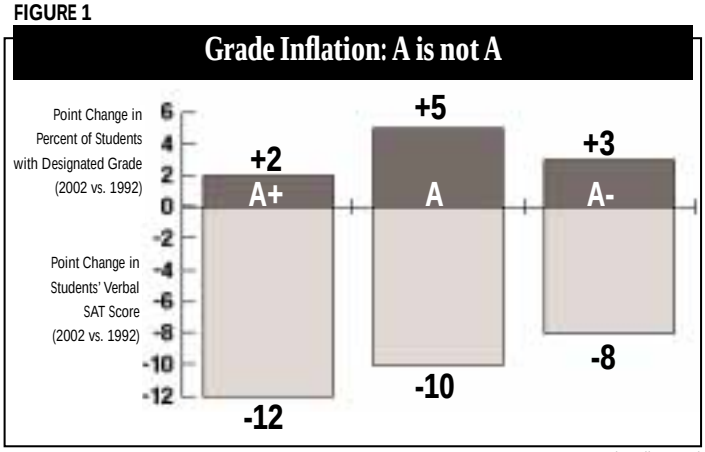
Although taking challenging courses in high school may lower a student's grade point average, the experience is likely to lift test scores. The College Board reports SAT scores are higher for this year's first-generation college students who took such challenging high school courses as precalculus, calculus, and physics. In some cases, taking tough courses lifted scores by more than 100 points.

The other college testing service—the ACT Assessment—also provides a breakout of ACT scores for high school seniors who take a core curriculum versus those who don't. This year's high school seniors who took at least the core curriculum earned an average composite score of 21.8 on the ACT Assessment, compared to an average score of 19.2 for those who took less than the core curriculum. (See Figure 2.)

"This year's results point out the importance of taking rigorous, college-preparatory coursework in high school," said ACT CEO Richard L. Ferguson. "Students who do otherwise will find themselves academically under-prepared when they arrive at college."

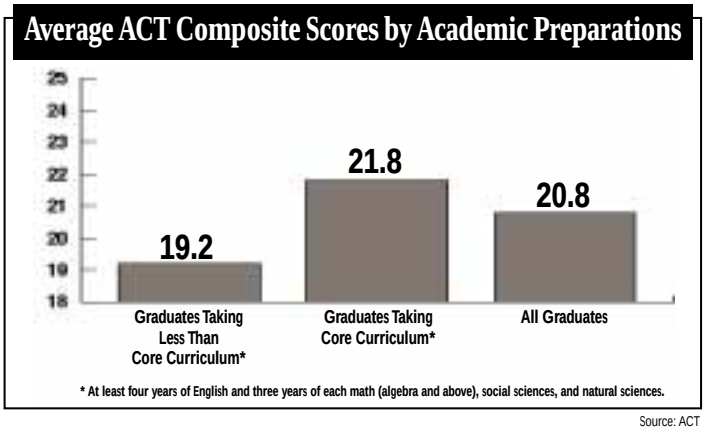
ACT defines the core college-preparatory curriculum as four or more years of English and three or more years each of social science, natural sciences, and math—algebra and above.

FIGURE 1



Source: The College Board

FIGURE 2



Source: ACT

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JUST THE FACTS: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

ACT SCORES		SAT SCORES				NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS TESTS-PERCENT SCORING AT OR ABOVE "PROFICIENT"					
ACT Average Composite (2002)	% of Grads Tested	% of Grads Tested	Mean Verbal (2002)	Mean Math (2002)	State	4th-Grade Reading (1998)	8th-Grade Reading (1998)	4th-Grade Math (2000)	8th-Grade Math (2000)	4th-Grade Science (2000)	8th-Grade Science (2000)
20.8	39	46	504	516	Nation	29	31	25	26	27	30
20.1	71	9	560	559	Alabama	24	21	14	16	22	22
21.3	31	52	516	519	Alaska	-	-	-	-	-	-
21.3	26	36	520	523	Arizona	22	28	17	21	22	24
20.2	72	5	560	556	Arkansas	23	23	13	14	24	23
21.4	13	52	496	517	California	20	22	15	18	14	15
20.1	99	28	543	548	Colorado	34	30	-	-	-	-
21.6	5	83	509	509	Connecticut	46	42	32	34	35	35
21.3	4	69	502	500	Delaware	25	25	-	-	-	-
20.4	39	57	496	499	Florida	23	23	-	-	-	-
19.8	20	65	489	491	Georgia	24	25	18	19	24	23
22.0	18	53	488	520	Hawaii	17	19	14	16	16	15
21.2	57	18	539	541	Idaho	-	-	21	27	31	-
20.1	99	11	578	596	Illinois	-	-	21	27	31	-
21.5	19	62	498	503	Indiana	-	-	31	31	22	35
22.0	66	5	591	602	Iowa	35	-	28	34	38	-
21.6	76	9	578	580	Kansas	34	35	30	21	-	-
20.0	72	12	550	552	Kentucky	29	29	17	-	29	29
19.6	79	8	561	559	Louisiana	19	18	14	12	19	18
22.5	6	69	503	502	Maine	36	42	25	32	38	37
20.4	11	67	507	513	Maryland	29	31	22	29	26	28
21.9	8	81	512	516	Massachusetts	37	36	33	32	43	42
21.3	68	11	558	572	Michigan	28	-	29	28	33	37
22.1	65	10	581	591	Minnesota	36	37	34	40	35	42
18.6	84	4	559	547	Mississippi	18	19	9	8	14	15
21.5	68	8	574	580	Missouri	29	29	23	22	35	36
21.7	52	23	541	547	Montana	37	38	25	37	38	46
21.7	72	8	561	570	Nebraska	-	-	24	31	26	36
21.3	36	34	509	518	Nevada	21	24	16	20	20	-
22.0	7	73	519	519	New Hampshire	38	-	-	-	-	-
20.7	5	82	498	513	New Jersey	-	-	-	-	-	-
20.0	63	14	551	543	New Mexico	22	24	12	13	18	20
22.2	14	79	494	506	New York	29	34	22	26	26	30
19.9	13	67	493	505	North Carolina	28	31	28	30	24	27
21.2	78	4	597	610	North Dakota	-	-	25	31	37	40
21.4	62	27	533	540	Ohio	-	-	26	31	32	-
20.5	69	8	565	562	Oklahoma	30	29	16	19	26	-
22.5	12	56	524	528	Oregon	28	33	23	32	28	33
21.5	7	72	498	500	Pennsylvania	-	-	-	-	-	-
21.9	6	73	504	503	Rhode Island	32	30	23	24	26	29
19.2	32	59	488	493	South Carolina	22	22	18	18	20	20
21.4	71	5	576	586	South Dakota	-	-	-	-	-	-
20.0	79	14	562	555	Tennessee	25	26	18	17	26	25
20.1	32	55	491	500	Texas	29	28	27	24	24	23
21.4	66	6	563	559	Utah	28	31	24	26	32	34
22.3	10	69	512	510	Vermont	-	-	29	32	38	40
20.6	11	68	510	506	Virginia	30	33	25	26	33	31
22.3	16	54	525	529	Washington	29	32	-	-	-	-
20.3	61	18	525	515	West Virginia	29	27	18	18	25	26
22.2	68	7	583	599	Wisconsin	34	33	-	-	-	-
21.4	64	11	531	537	Wyoming	30	29	25	25	33	36
17.5	28	76	480	473	Dist. of Columbia	-	-	6	6	-	-

Sources:
ACT Average Composite Scores by State, which are copyright 2002 by ACT, Inc., are from the ACT Web site at **www.act.org**.
SAT Scholastic Assessment Test averages by state, which are copyright 2002 by the College Examination Board, are from The College Board Web site at **www.collegeboard.com**.
NAEP data are published by the National Center for Education Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education, located at **http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard**.

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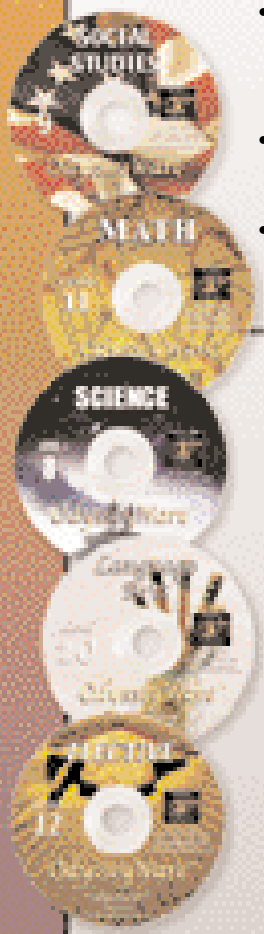

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